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LIBRARIES AND THE UNITED STATES FOOD ADMINISTRATION

By EDITH GUERRIER, *Director, Library Section, United States Food Administration*

In order that I might bring you the thanks of the United States Food Administration and greetings from the Food Administrator, I asked for five minutes on this program. It is almost a year since I was most unexpectedly called to Washington to help place food conservation propaganda in the libraries of the United States to the end that you might give it proper publicity. The Food Administrator was confident that if you had the material you would use it. You have clearly demonstrated that his confidence was not misplaced. The Food Administration is not going to ask you to turn your libraries into food shows. The fact that the food problem is quite as much a spiritual as a material one makes your help most vital and significant.

In the midst of turmoil and confusion it is legitimate that we should preserve in our libraries the quiet atmosphere that makes for what one of our librarians has aptly termed "emotional poise." In this quiet atmosphere we can with dignity present the food problems of the world and it is our privilege to study means of presenting those problems which shall appeal to all who enter your doors.

Almost a year ago the Food Administrator said when he was first appointed:

"If democracy is worth anything, we can do these things by coöperation, by stimulation, by self-sacrifice, by the patriotic mobilization of the brains of this country. If it cannot be done in this manner it is better that we accept German domination and confess the failure of our political ideals, acquiesce in the superiority of the German conception and send for the Germans to instruct us in its use."

Thank God we have proven our right to rely upon democracy. One incident alone is sufficient. The first of last December we had for export until the next harvest 20,000,000 bushels of wheat. If we keep up our present rate of export, by next har-

vest we shall have exported 150,000,000 bushels, 130,000,000 bushels being the free offering of this great free-hearted country.

Sacrifice, service and sharing the gifts of Him whom we worship in spirit and in truth have accomplished that which all the perfect, long established systems, the gifts of emperors and kaisers, can never hope to overthrow. The poets and the philosophers, the wise men of the ages, they are the ones who must nerve us for this task, and it is our gracious privilege to provide the spiritual food so abundantly that the material food will have more than a mere material significance.

As members of this splendid organization, as librarians, as citizens of this great free country, we have now the part of torch bearers, and the torch must be held with no wavering hand. If, for instance, we doubt the value of our work, the answer is "buckle down to work." If we find out that we as individuals have nothing to do with the making of the morning, we may say with Rostand's Chanticleer, "Then I am just the cock of a remoter sun! My cries so affect the night that it lets certain beams of the day pierce through its black tent, and those are what we call the stars. I shall not live to see shining upon the steeples that final total light composed of stars clustered in unbroken mass; but if I sing faithfully and sonorously, and if, long after me, and long after that, in every farmyard its cock sings faithfully, sonorously, I truly believe there will be no more night."

Acknowledging freely that as a mere person I am unworthy to be your representative in the Food Administration, I yet cannot give a backward look. My hand is on the plow and I ask that you continue to open your fields for the Food Administration team. I ask with the sure knowledge that he who asketh receiveth.